



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

September 10, 1999

1420 East 6th Ave.
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Environmental Quality Council
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Fisheries Division
Endangered Species Coordinator
Nongame Coordinator
Ken McDonald, Native Species Coordinator
Missoula Office

Montana State Library, Helena
MT Environmental Information Center
Montana Audubon Council
Missoula County Conservation District, 5115 Highway 93 South, Missoula, MT 59801
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Helena
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena
State Historic Preservation Office, Helena
Mr. Gary Elliot, 21275 E. Mullan Road, Clinton, MT 59825

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please find enclosed an Environmental Assessment prepared for a Future Fisheries Project tentatively planned to stabilize an eroding cut-bank and restore riparian habitat on the Clark Fork River. This proposed project is located approximately 2 miles south of the town of Clinton in Missoula County.

Please submit any comments that you have by 5 P.M., October 12, 1999 to the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Helena at the address listed above. Completion of this project is contingent upon approval being granted by the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (406) 444-2432.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Lere'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping 'M' and 'L'.

Mark Lere, Program Officer
Habitat Protection Bureau
Fisheries Division

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
Fisheries Division
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Clark Fork River Bank Stabilization and Riparian Restoration Project

General Purpose: The 1995 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-272 through 273 which directs the Department to administer a Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The program involves physical projects to restore degraded fish habitat in rivers and lakes for the purpose of improving wild fisheries. The legislature established an earmarked funding account to help accomplish this goal. This project is being proposed to stabilize an eroding stream bank on the Clark Fork River by shaping the bank, transplanting mature willow and dogwood and creating a grazing enclosure. The project site, involving a single property owner, is located approximately 2 miles south of the town of Clinton in Missoula County (Attachment 1).

I. Location of Project: This project will be conducted on the Clark Fork River located approximately 2 miles south of the town of Clinton within Township 11 North, Range 17 West, Sections 2 and 3 in Missoula County.

II. Need for the Project: Department Goal C indicates that a Fisheries Division objective is to "provide and support programs to conserve and enhance high quality aquatic habitat and protect native aquatic species." The Future Fisheries Improvement Program is a tool to help achieve that objective.

Due to past grazing practices, a 600 foot bank of the Clark Fork River has been denuded of riparian vegetation and has become unstable. The purpose of this proposal is to restore the riparian habitat and increase bank stability using "soft" stabilization techniques. The proposal calls for shaping the eroding bank to reduce shear stress and transplanting mature willow and dogwood to provide for erosion resistance. Additionally, the proposal calls for installing 450 feet of riparian fencing with a 40 foot buffer to exclude livestock grazing from the riparian corridor.

III. Scope of the Project:

The proposal calls for stabilizing approximately 600 feet of eroding stream bank on the Clark Fork River. The proposed work involves shaping the bank to reduce shear stress and transplanting mature willow and dogwood to increase erosion resistance. To protect the riparian corridor from livestock grazing, 450 feet of riparian fence would be installed that would tie into 150 feet of fence that is already in place. Disturbed areas would be seeded with native grasses and woody shrubs would be sprigged/planted along the channel margin. This project is expected to cost \$2,669.00. Of this total, the Future Fisheries Improvement Program would be contributing up to \$1,334.00.

IV. Environmental Impact Checklist:

Please see attached checklist.

V. Explanation of Impacts to the Physical Environment

1. Terrestrial and aquatic life and habitats.

Restoring riparian habitat and stabilizing an eroding bank of the Clark Fork River is expected to create a more healthy habitat for aquatic life by reducing sediment input. Expected improvements in the aquatic habitat should enhance resident trout populations in the river. Habitat for riparian dependent wildlife would also be improved by enhancing the riparian vegetative community by transplanting a variety of woody shrubs along the river margin. A 40 foot riparian buffer would be created with fencing.

2. Water quantity, quality and distribution.

Short term increases in turbidity will occur during project construction. To minimize turbidity, construction will occur during a low flow period and operation of equipment in the stream channel will be minimized to the extent practicable. The Department of Environmental Quality will be contacted to determine narrative conditions required to meet short-term water quality standards and protect aquatic biota. A 310 permit will be obtained from the local Conservation District. In the long term, stabilizing the existing channel would reduce the sediment contribution to downstream areas, thereby improving the overall quality of downstream waters.

3. Geology and soil quality, stability and moisture.

Soils along the stream margin would be disturbed by bank shaping, but would stabilize quickly following proposed re-vegetation efforts. Overall, the project is expected to reduce bank erosion and improve channel stability.

4. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality.

Riparian vegetation and cover would be improved by creating a more stable stream channel and by sprigging and transplanting a variety of shrubs along the stream corridor.

5. Aesthetics.

Aesthetics would be enhanced by restoring the riparian habitat and stabilizing a cut-bank, thereby creating a more healthy and natural stream environment. The riparian vegetative community would be enhanced by sprigging and transplanting riparian shrubs along the margins of the channel. Livestock grazing would be excluded from a 40 foot riparian buffer with fencing.

7. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources.

The Clark Fork River supports bull trout, a species listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. As such, this project will be included in Montana Fish, Wildlife

and Park's Section 6 conservation plan with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Restoring riparian habitat and stabilizing an eroding stream bank should improve bull trout habitat by reducing the input of sediment into the river.

9. Historic and archaeological sites.

The proposed project will likely require an individual Army Corp of Engineers 404 permit. Therefore, the State Historic Preservation Office has been contacted to determine the need for compliance with the federal historic preservation regulations. The project will not begin until a cultural clearance is granted.

VI. Explanation of Impacts on the Human Environment.

7. Access to & quality of recreational activities.

It is anticipated that the restoration of the riparian corridor and the stabilization of a cut-bank on the Clark Fork River would improve overall aquatic habitat and, as a result, would enhance trout populations residing in the river. Consequently, the recreational fishery in the river would be expected to be improved. The public is allowed access to several locations on this reach of the Clark Fork River.

VII. Discussion and Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives.

1. No Action Alternative

If no action is taken, a cut-bank of the Clark Fork River will continue to erode and the riparian corridor will remain denuded. This bank erosion will continue to contribute to excessive sediment loading and the loss of fish habitat. In addition, habitat for riparian dependent wildlife will remain in a degraded condition. Recreational opportunities associated with fish and wildlife resources will remain reduced and aesthetics will continue to be impaired.

2. The Proposed Alternative

The proposed alternative is designed to stabilize a cut-bank on the Clark Fork River by shaping the bank and restoring the riparian vegetative community. Additionally, a riparian buffer would be created with fencing to exclude livestock grazing along the river margin. These activities would reduce sediment loading, resulting in a more healthy habitat for aquatic life. The sprigging and transplanting of a variety of shrubs along the river margin would create more diverse habitat for riparian dependent wildlife. This alternative would improve fish and wildlife habitat, aesthetics and water quality within the project area.

VIII. Environmental Assessment Conclusion Section

1. Is an EIS required? No.

We conclude from this review that the proposed activities will have a positive impact on the physical and human environment.

2. Level of public involvement.

The proposed project was reviewed and supported by the public review panel of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The proposed project also will be reviewed by the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission and will be contingent upon their approval. The Environmental Assessment (EA) is being distributed to all individuals and groups listed on the cover letter. The EA will be published on the Montana Electronic Bulletin Board.

3. Duration of comment period?

Public comment will be accepted through 5 P.M. on October 12, 1999.

4. Person responsible for preparing the EA.

Mark Lere, Program Officer
Habitat Protection Bureau
Fisheries Division
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks
1420 East 6th Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

Telephone: (406) 444-2432

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS
 1420 E 6th Ave, PO BOX 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701
 (406) 444-2535

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Title Clark Fork River Bank Stabilization and Riparian Restoration Project

Division/Bureau Fisheries Division -Future Fisheries Improvement

Description of Project The project is being proposed to stabilize an eroding stream bank on the Clark Fork River by shaping the bank, transplanting mature willow and dogwood and creating a livestock grazing exclosure with riparian fencing. The project site, involving a single landowner, is located approximately 2 miles south of the town of Clinton in Missoula County.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Terrestrial & aquatic life and habitats			X			X
2. Water quality, quantity & distribution			X			X
3. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture			X			X
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality		X				X
5. Aesthetics			X			X
6. Air quality				X		
7. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources			X			X
8. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		X

POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Social structures & mores				X		
2. Cultural uniqueness & diversity				X		
3. Local & state tax base & tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural or industrial production				X		
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational and wilderness activities			X			X
8. Quantity & distribution of employment				X		
9. Distribution & density of population & housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial & commercial activity				X		
12. Demands for energy				X		
13. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals				X		
14. Transportation networks & traffic flows				X		

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction Missoula County Conservation District, NRCS, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Army Corp of Engineers, Montana Department of

Environmental Quality, State Historic Preservation Office

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA Ladd Knotek, Montana
Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Recommendation concerning preparation of EIS No EIS required.

EA prepared by : Mark Lere

Date: August 16, 1999

SECRET

